

nationwide public option. Employees enrolled in the national plan will be able to keep their plan even if they change jobs, move to a different State or have changes in their medical condition.

Costs will be driven down, with comprehensive measures designed to improve quality and promote efficiency, including investing in health information technology.

Under my plan, people aged 55 to 65 will be allowed to buy into Medicare to provide security to early retirees, who are often charged higher premiums based on their age and risk of incurring higher medical costs.

My plan ensures that all children have access to health insurance by expanding the SCHIP program and improving outreach and enrollment.

It eliminates barriers so parents can cover their children up to age 25 under their family insurance plan.

Middle-class Americans deserve a health care system with affordable insurance premiums and access to the best possible care. Small business owners need a system that allows them to stay competitive and provide good coverage for their employees.

Older Americans and younger Americans, two of our most vulnerable populations, need a system that guarantees access to necessary care, regardless of income level.

We need experienced, dedicated leadership to address the fundamental shortcomings of our existing health care system. My Healthy Americans Plan will make the system more efficient and cost-effective and will improve access to quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IN MEMORY OF CONGRESSWOMAN STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise to pay tribute to the life and legacy of a great woman, my friend and colleague, Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones.

First, I would like to offer my deepest condolences to Stephanie's entire family, her son Merv and her sister Barbara. I also want to offer my condolences to the constituents of Ohio's 11th Congressional District, to all of Stephanie's many friends and colleagues, and, of course, to her staff here in Washington, DC and in Ohio.

On August 20th, the people of Cleveland, this Nation and the world lost a

giant in the fight for equality and justice when we lost our beloved Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones. When I walked on to the floor tonight, I looked for Stephanie. She wasn't in the Speaker's Chair presiding. She wasn't on the floor moving around, energizing and inspiring our deliberations. It is hard to accept the fact and to believe that her physical presence won't be with us anymore.

So many knew Stephanie Tubbs Jones for her exceptional work on behalf of her constituents and for the many barriers she broke and trails she blazed as the first African American woman elected to Congress from Ohio, as the first African American woman to serve on the Ways and Means Committee, and the first to chair the House Ethics Committee.

Congresswoman Tubbs Jones and I came to Congress about the same time. We worked closely together for a decade, and she was one of the most remarkable persons I have ever known. Whether it was standing up for Ohio voters and fighting for election reform, or fighting to end the unjust war and occupation of Iraq, she was always on the right side of history. And, like for many, Stephanie Tubbs Jones was a very, very good friend.

Friendship means different things to different people. Stephanie's friendship for me meant trust. She was my confidante. Stephanie's friendship for me meant support. Stephanie Tubbs Jones' friendship meant spending girl time, shopping, eating, traveling, talking about matters of the heart, like her man-child son Merv, who was her heart and her soul. Stephanie's friendship to me meant being for real in discussions about political and legislative issues. And Stephanie's friendship for me meant a lot of love.

I always remember last year when my father passed away, the love and concern for me and my family that she displayed. With the loss of her husband, her mother, her father and her sister, she assured me that I needed to grieve, and she called me day and night to make sure I wasn't planning on coming right back to work after the funeral. And, oh, how right she was.

From attending events together, to just grabbing dinner or an occasional down moment, we spent a great deal of time together throughout the years. Stephanie was my traveling partner. We shared magnificent experiences in Israel and in Cuba. I will always cherish those times and memories.

It was during some of our travel together and our work together for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation that I got the chance to know her husband, Mervyn Jones, whom she loved dearly and tragically lost in October of 2003. In the wake of his death, Stephanie created two very successful Golf and Bid Whist Tournaments in his memory through the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. And she insisted that her friends and her colleagues participate with her.

She loved young people, and made sure that these annual events helped raise money for countless scholarships. I know she would be pleased that a scholarship now has been established in her memory.

Some have spoken of Stephanie's culinary experiences and skills. She would bring some of her fabulous chili here to share with us, and always loved to it share her recipes, especially her mustard-based fried catfish and her mother's fried corn recipe.

I can remember calling her on her cell one day. She was in a meeting in Cleveland while I was preparing her fried corn recipe. Of course, I didn't quite get it right, so she stepped out of this meeting and she walked me through this recipe, step by step.

We all have so many Stephanie stories. She was a woman for all seasons, a devoted mother, a devoted sister, a brilliant legislator, a dedicated representative of Ohio's 11th Congressional District, and she was a history maker, as the first African American woman to break many glass ceilings. And, yes, she was my trusted friend, a true friend, and a fabulous woman whose smile lifted us all up and forced us to be positive, even on days when we were down. Stephanie was my gym partner, as we both tried to get our physical fitness regimen back on track.

Yes, the Honorable, and that she was, Mr. Speaker, the Honorable Stephanie Tubbs Jones, was a great congressperson, and she never lost the common touch. She would help people find their seats on the airplane, she mentored young people, and she would constantly remind us to be strong advocates for working men and women. Recalling her father's work as a sky-cap, she never forgot who she was, and she used her positions to help those shut out and those underrepresented.

So, yes, we owe Stephanie Tubbs Jones a debt of gratitude. I thank her son Mervyn and her sister Barbara and her entire family for sharing this brilliant and beautiful woman with us. Her spirit is smiling tonight on us. It continues to move around this floor, nudging us to do the right thing.

May God's grace and His love undergird her family during these difficult days, and may we redouble our efforts in Stephanie's memory, our efforts for justice and peace and equality and to make this a better world for all.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BOOZMAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. BRALEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BRALEY of Iowa addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)